

## jim and jane's day out by rileyhart

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**Summary:**

the snow ball's coming up, which means el needs an outfit.

## jim and jane's day out

### Author's Note:

another (semi) post s2 fic as promised!

“Hey, kid!” Hopper says, grinning as he walks through the door. “I’ve got good news!”

El, sitting on the floor in front of the couch studying a large atlas, looks up expectantly.

“You can go to the Snow Ball,” he tells her, his eyes sparkling, already predicting her happiness.

Her mouth opens slightly and her eyes widen. “Really?”

He nods with a grin. “Really.”

And before he can blink she is scrambling up over the couch and leaping into his arms. He catches her and hugs her tightly, laughing at her reaction.

“And look at this,” he says after a moment, and El leans out, as Hopper reaches into his pocket and pulls out a slip of paper, passing it to her.

“Jane Hopper,” she reads slowly, and her breath catches in her throat. She looks up at Hopper, her eyes wide again. “Does this mean... Does this mean you’re my dad?”

He gulps. “Yeah, if you want.”

She smiles ever so slightly and nods. “Dad.”

“Jane,” he says to her, and she hugs him again, wrapping her arms around him, and he’s glad she can’t see the tears in his eyes.

“Okay,” he clears his throat loudly, and puts her down, “I’m guessing we need to buy you a dress or something, you can’t go to a dance in overalls or one of my shirts,”

“Does that mean we get to go shopping?” she asks, smiling.

“How do you know about shopping?”

She shrugs. “Saw it on TV.”

He chuckles. “Yeah, it does, but we’ll go to the next town over so no one recognises me, or you for that matter.”

She beams up at him, and he ruffles her hair affectionately.

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He takes her dress shopping the next day, deciding to drive a couple of towns over just to be extra careful no one gets suspicious; they end up in a town called Pawnee, which is just over an hour away from Hawkins.

Hopper hasn’t been to a mall since... he can’t remember when, and he already wants to get the hell out of there the second they step foot in the damn place, but El is immediately enthralled, her eyes wide as she looks everywhere.

It reminds her of Chicago, all big and busy, full of people.

“So this is a mall?” she asks Hopper as they walk along, holding hands.

“Yeah.”

“M-A-L-L, mall, rhymes with ‘wall’.”

Hopper laughs. “Yeah, that’s the one.”

They reach an escalator, and El looks at it with alarm. “Is it supposed to move?” she whispers up at Hopper.

“Yeah, it’s fine, kid, c’mon,”

El steps gingerly onto the escalator, her eyes widening as the step rises up, clutching tight onto Hopper’s hand and the banister. She begins to laugh half way up and a couple of people stare but Hopper can’t bring himself to tell her to be quiet, he hasn’t seen her laugh so

hard before.

“That was so much fun,” El says once they reach the top.

“Yeah, you think?”

El nods her head vigorously, and naturally they spend the next twenty minutes going up and down the escalators. Hopper wonders what will happen when El eventually finds out about roller coasters.

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“Okay, we should probably actually do what we came here to do,” Hopper says, “these places are cursed, they suck you in and you never get out.”

“Like a trap?” El asks curiously.

“Exactly like a trap.” he affirms, leading her into the nearest store.

The walls, the clothes, everything in the store is so oppressively bright and neon that Hopper wouldn’t be surprised if he died from an aneurism.

He lets go of El’s hand, but follows her around the store as she looks at dresses, occasionally stopping to admire one and say “pretty” under her breath; she even looks a black dress up and down, before declaring it “bitchin’”. A woman standing nearby glares at El before pulling her seven year old daughter away, muttering something about manners.

“El, El, you can’t say that word in public.” Hopper tells her quickly.

El frowns. “Why not?”

“It’s just... It’s rude, kid, you just can’t say it.”

El looks slightly disgruntled, but goes the rest of the shopping trip without calling anything ‘bitchin’.

She eventually picks out three dresses to try on, and Hopper waits outside the changing room.

“You here with your daughter too?” asks another man waiting near Hopper.

“Um... yeah, yeah I am,” he replies, a lump suddenly in his throat.

“They grow up so fast, don’t they?” the man comments, and Hopper nods, thinking of El and the scrawny child he’d first found in the woods, but he also can’t help think ‘ *Not always* ’, his mind drifting to Sara, as it always does when children are the topic of conversation.

El emerges from the changing room and passes Hopper a blue dress with pink dots and trimming.

“This one?” he asks, and she nods. “Good choice,” he tells her, ruffling her hair.

They pick out a matching pink belt, and a blue clip for her hair. El hovers around the makeup section, putting all the testers on her hands, until they are stained a strange sparkly rainbow colour. She eventually chooses pink lipgloss and eyeshadow, as well as a gold bracelet.

There’s a display of girly magazines by the counter, and Hopper grabs one to help with hair and makeup, before grabbing a couple more to keep El occupied while she’s stuck in the cabin.

It gives him an idea, and he takes El to a bookstore where he lets her pick out three books, then the next stop is a video store for three movies, and a stationary store for paper and coloured pencils.

Their final stop (after riding the escalators a couple more times) is the food court.

“There’s so much food,” El whispers to Hopper, staring wide eyed around her.

“Welcome to the culinary world, kid, take your pick,” Hopper says grandly.

They end up eating burgers and fries.

“Now *this* is food, El.” Hopper tells her with conviction, his mouth

full of burger, and she laughs.

*"Delicious!"* she says, mimicking Hopper's tone.

"And how do you spell delicious?"

"D-E-L-I-C-I-O-U-S." she says proudly, before taking a comically large bite out of her burger.

Hopper grins, watching El happily devour her incredibly unhealthy meal.

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"Fun day out?" Hopper asks as they get back into the car.

El nods her head enthusiastically.

"Yeah, you know for once I didn't actually want to blow my brains out at a mall," he says as he begins to drive.

El gives him a confused smile, scrunching up her nose, and he laughs.

"Maybe we could do this more often kid," he suggests, "not shopping," he adds quickly, "but go out for the day, away from Hawkins."

"Yes," she replies immediately, nodding her head.

"We could go to the movies, go bowling,"

"Go on the escalators again?" she adds hopefully.

He laughs. "Well, I'm not making any promises, but I'll see what I can do."

"Excited for the Snow Ball?" Hopper asks after a moment.

El nods. "Very," she grins.

"Yeah, and hopefully you'll get to do heaps more of those normal growing up things in about a year, dances, school, stuff like that?"

"That'd be nice," she says wistfully.

“And we’d just have two rules not three.”

She narrows her eyes suspiciously.

“One,” he says, “no powers in public. Two: no ‘bitchin’ in public.”

El laughs. “Powers and bitchin’ at home?”

Hopper mimics her narrowed eyes. “Sometimes.”

She smiles. “Sometimes.” she echoes, as they drive home happily.